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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/17): PALESTINIANS: U.S. BEARS
RESPONSIBILITY TO PRESSURE NETANYAHU

Main Stories:

All dailies lead with news of thousands of Muslims entering the Jerusalem Al-Aqsa mosque compound on April 16 to successfully prevent "extremist Jewish groups" from making good on earlier promises to "break into" the compound. Papers note that several Palestinian Authority officials and religious figures "joined the people" at the mosque. Papers further note that Israeli police prevented young Muslim men from praying inside the compound.

All dailies front page coverage on Special Envoy Mitchell's meetings with Israeli officials on April 16. The reports highlight Mitchell's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, running comments by Mitchell stating that the U.S. supports the two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, living in peace with Israel. Such resolution would contribute to regional peace, according to Mitchell. Al Ayyam runs a front page photo of Mitchell and Netanyahu. Al Hayat Al Jadida front pages a photo of Mitchell speaking at the Tel Aviv press conference. Reporting further notes that Netanyahu called on Palestinians, during the press conference, to recognize Israel as a Jewish state before any negotiations can begin. Netanyahu clarified that Israel does not want to control Palestinians but rather maintain security. All papers note that Netanyahu did not make mention of the two-state solution. Papers also run statements by Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman about Annapolis "reaching a dead end" and Israel's desire to assist in strengthening the Palestinian economy. Lieberman also called on the international community to remain fully committed to Israel's security and denounce Hamas, according to coverage. All front pages note Palestinian reaction to April 16 comments made by Israeli officials regarding the peace process. Palestinian Authority spokesperson, Nabil Abu Rudaynah called Israeli positions "obstacles" to the two-state solution and a rejection of

international standards, the Road Map and the Annapolis agreement.

Al-Quds runs separate front page coverage citing Israeli daily Yedeoth Ahronoth, about U.S. efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict running parallel to U.S. efforts to address the Iranian nuclear threat.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al-Quds independent daily runs an editorial under the title, "What does Lieberman want?" (04/17): "Reading between the lines, we see that statements by [Israeli Foreign Minister] Lieberman [during his meeting with Special Envoy Mitchell], are as duplicitous as the man is himself... He turns his back on the peace process and calls on the international community to legitimize the various Israeli policies imposed on the Palestinian Territories, including the expansion of settlements and demolition of homes... Therefore, President Obama has a responsibility to expose this duplicitous behavior and make Israel end occupation and dismantle settlements so that Palestinians can live in dignity and peace like other peoples throughout the world."

2) Samih Shabib opines in Al-Ayyam independent daily under the title, "How can we contain Netanyahu's government?" (04/17): "How should the Palestinians confront the Netanyahu government? Is an official Palestinian condemnation enough, one that states, "we will not deal with this government which is an obstacle to peace?" This is not enough. Israel must be compelled to meet some of the conditions laid out in the Annapolis agreement and dismantle

JERUSALEM 00000675 002 OF 002

settlements... a clear and unified Arab position is also needed to pressure Israel, but it must be coupled with a unified Palestinian position."

WALLES